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Articles in Today's Clips

Monday, July 31, 006

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— THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

Chip can provide parents with child ID information

Masons' program transfers documents, physical data to CD

Friday, July 28, 2006

From News staff reports

A one-of-a-kind CD is being made available to parents of elementary and middle school students in Livingston County. It comes in the form of person identification information.

The Brighton Masonic Lodge is offering a free identification clinic Saturday at its lodge in downtown Brighton. Any information brought by a parent or guardian about a child will be transferred to a CD. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children recognizes the Mason's CD, called the Comprehensive Masonic Chip, as one of the most complete child identification programs in the nation.

Parents are recommended to bring a child's birth certificate, Social Security number, immunization records, medical reports, divorce decree, custody or adoption papers, pictures, and vital statistics.

In addition, there will also be laser finger printing, a DNA swab, dental impressions, and a recorded interview. All information will be given to the parent or guardian before leaving the event. It is all free, and no records will be retained.

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Fire witness points to mom

But later, he says she didn't kill kids

BY L.L. BRASIER
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

July 29, 2006

The defense rested Friday in the murder trial of Juwan Deering, who is accused of setting a house fire and killing five children ages 6 to 11 inside -- but not before Deering's attorney introduced surprising testimony.

Marvin Craig, 43, lived across the street from the Dean family in Royal Oak Township and saw the family's home burn almost to the ground the night of April 6, 2000.

Under questioning by defense attorney Arnold Weiner, Craig told jurors that the morning after the fire, Marie Dean, who escaped the fire but lost four of her nine children in the blaze, told him that she "had too many kids to start with and she had the right amount now."



Juwan Deering is accused of setting a fire that killed five kids in 2000.

Dean, 45, who has wept off and on during the two-week trial, shook her head as she listened.

But under cross-examination by Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor Gregory Townsend, Craig admitted that he hadn't mentioned the statement to police when questioned in the days following the fire, and again a year later.

"I didn't think it was important," he said.

Craig also acknowledged that he had corresponded with Deering while Deering has been jailed awaiting trial.

Townsend, clearly furious, pointed at Dean and asked Craig, "You don't think in any manner that she set that house on fire. ...You don't believe she killed her own children, do you?"

Craig replied, "No."

Deering, 35, and formerly of Royal Oak Township, has admitted to being a drug dealer and is accused of setting the blaze because he was angry over a drug debt owed by Oliver (Big Mike) Dean, Marie Dean's husband and the father of four of the five children who died.

He is charged with five counts of felony murder and one count of arson. He faces life in prison if convicted.

The case is before Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Wendy Potts. Closing arguments are planned for Monday.

Contact **L.L. BRASIER** at 248-858-2262 or brasier@freepress.com.

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ClickOnDetroit.com

Baby Drowns In Family Pool

POSTED: 7:47 am EDT July 31, 2006

UPDATED: 7:55 am EDT July 31, 2006

A 20-month-old baby is dead after drowning in the family's pool.

It happened Sunday near Inkster and Nine Mile in Southfield.

"The child was playing and when they looked around, the baby wasn't there," said Crystal Patten, the child's aunt.

The family is looking for help from the community for burial costs.

They are setting up a fund and planning funeral arrangements.

Police are investigating, but believe it was an accident.

Stay tuned to Local 4 and ClickOnDetroit for that information when it becomes available.

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ClickOnDetroit.com

U.S. House Would Ban MySpace From Schools

POSTED: 10:24 am EDT July 31, 2006

The U.S. House voted Thursday to ban social networking sites such as MySpace.com from school and library computers.

Some complained, however, that the wording of the law is so broad that it could ban many common sites.

Rep. Michael Fitzpatrick, who introduced the Deleting Online Predators Act, said it was necessary because some services have become "feeding grounds for child predators that use these sites as just another way to do our children harm."

According to the law, it bans sites that:

- Are offered by a commercial entity
- Let users create online profiles with personal information
- Let registered users create and share an online journal
- Ask for personalized information
- Allow communication among users

Opponents said along with MySpace, that could include Amazon.com and other shopping sites and any news or entertainment service that includes message boards on which users can post after creating an account.

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RELATED TO STORY

SURVEY

Do you think that MySpace.com is dangerous for children and teenagers?

- ☐ **Yes, they should not use it.**
- ☐ **As with most things, it can be if the kids are not monitored.**
- ☐ **No, the danger is being blown out of proportion.**

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Felon kept job asfter principal got notice

Sunday, July 30, 2006

By Chad Livengood

clivengood@citpat.com -- 768-4918

In May 2003, a probation officer told a Jackson Public Schools principal that a woman who works with children in an elementary classroom had just been convicted of dealing cocaine.

But William Patterson, then principal at Wilson Elementary School, didn't share the information with his superiors at the central office. That allowed Tonia M. Jones to continue working as a teacher's aide for nearly three years at Wilson and three other district elementaries.

It wasn't until January this year, when Jones was sentenced to 30 months in prison on a parole violation, that Superintendent Dan Evans said he learned of Jones' troubles.

And it wasn't until last week, when Evans viewed documents the Citizen Patriot obtained from the state Department of Corrections, that anyone at the district's central office found out that Patterson had known all along, Evans said.

Earlier in the week, Patterson told the Citizen Patriot that he had never spoken to a probation officer about Jones or received the facsimile document from the DOC.

"I didn't know anything," Patterson said Monday.

By Thursday, he had fessed up to his bosses.

Evans and board President David Halsey said Patterson's lapse in judgment could have been a result of his youthfulness and inexperience.

"We all make mistakes, and we all have to learn," Halsey said.

Patterson, who is in his mid-30s, could not be reached for further comment.

Patterson, whose sister is school board Vice President Sheila Patterson, was principal at Wilson from September 2001 to June 2003. At the end of the 2002-03 school year, he left to become an assistant principal at the Middle School at Parkside.

Sheila Patterson defended Jones, saying she is a friend of her family.

"She is a nice young lady," said Patterson, who was elected to the board in June 2004. "I think she got mixed up with the wrong group of people."

Jones, 31, served 60-day terms in jail during the summers of 2003, 2004 and 2005 so she could keep her job, officially known as a paraprofessional. She had one remaining summer term to serve.

But Jones was arrested Dec. 21, 2005, on a bench warrant for continuing to maintain a drug house at her home, 706 Oakhill Ave., according to Jackson police. That violated her probation.

Judge Chad Schmucker sentenced her to 30 months in prison Jan. 18 on additional charges of felony firearm and maintaining a drug house -- charges that had been dropped in 2003. The district fired her Feb. 1.

Jones worked 10 years for the district. She is the daughter of Ted Jones, who retired from the school district in 2003 as director of operations.

How it happened

On April 30, 2003, Jones pleaded guilty to delivery/manufacture of cocaine.

Eight days later, Probation Officer Janet Schubring called William Patterson, she said, informing him that Jones had been convicted and was to be sentenced June 4 in Jackson County Circuit Court. Such notification of an employer is part of standard procedure at the state Department of Corrections.

Schubring followed up May 8 by sending a facsimile of Jones' Felony Information Sheet to Patterson; Schubring received confirmation the sheet had been received by the fax machine at Wilson, a document obtained by the Citizen Patriot shows.

On Thursday, Patterson gave Evans a letter dated May 15, 2003, that he said he wrote at the request of Jones' attorney, George Lyons, according to Evans. The salutation in the letter was "To Whom It May Concern."

It read, in part:

"On Thursday, May 8, 2003 ... I received a phone call from Janet Schubring. She informed me that Ms. Tonia Jones had pled guilty to a felony and that she should not still be employed at Wilson Elementary. My comment in return was that she (Janet Schubring) would need to take that issue up with ... Central Office."

The letter was never sent to the administration and wasn't in Jones' personnel file.

When shown the letter, a Department of Corrections spokesman blasted Patterson for implying that Schubring recommended Jones be fired.

"It would be absolutely ridiculous to say that any employer should retain or fire an employee. No probation officer would make a statement like this," said Russ Marlan. "The decision whether to fire or not is the employer's decision."

According to the routine pre-sentencing investigation Schubring conducted for Schmucker's review, Patterson told Schubring he would inform the district's Central Office about Jones' conviction.

Since Patterson was Jones' immediate supervisor, it was his responsibility to notify Central Office, Evans said.

"That doesn't totally negate the thing," Evans said of Patterson's letter, which contradicts Schubring's memo. "At that time he thought that was the thing to do."

'Excellent job'

New laws mandate disclosure of school employee's felonies.

Evans has said the district would have taken action against Jones if it had known about the felony earlier.

But Jones' former union representative doubts that her summertime sentence would have given the district grounds to fire her under the union contract's "just-cause clause."

"If she was doing jail time in the summer, that wouldn't affect her job performance," said Nina Boyers, past president of Jackson Paraprofessional Association, who is now retired. "There would have been grounds to fight a dismissal under the clause."

Jones never informed the union of her conviction, Boyers said.

Jones' personnel file, reviewed by the Citizen Patriot, indicates her job performance had been satisfactory.

"Tonia does an excellent job of working with the students and staff. She is encouraging to the students," Frost Elementary School Principal Randy Cook wrote in a Feb. 4, 2004, evaluation of Jones' job performance at Cascades Elementary School.

In recent years, Jones worked in Cascades, McCulloch and Wilson elementaries, ending her tenure this winter at Hunt Elementary School.

Hunt Principal Mary Jo Raczkowski declined comment, referring the matter to Evans and Debra Jackson, the district's executive director of human resources.

While Patterson failed to notify Central Office, it also was Jones' responsibility to inform the human resources office of her drug-dealing conviction, Jackson said.

"The obligation and responsibilities fall on the employee," Jackson said Thursday, referring to Jones.

The wrong crowd

The judge, county prosecutor's office, defense attorney and Jones' mother say she got involved with her boyfriend and one-time co-defendant, Demetrius Thomas Anderson, also the father of her 7-year-old son.

"Tonia is guilty of making bad choices of the 'friends' she chooses and trusts," her mother, Deborah Ward of Ypsilanti, wrote in a Jan. 12 letter to Schmucker.

Anderson, 35, of Detroit was convicted in 1993 for possession with intent to deliver less than 50 grams of cocaine.

Anderson faces outstanding charges in the 2001 crime of delivering cocaine for which Jones was convicted following a guilty plea. He also is accused of fleeing and eluding police in that case, court records show.

Anderson is scheduled to appear in District Court on Aug. 29 for a preliminary examination before Judge James Justin.

During his client's June 4, 2003, sentencing, Lyons described Anderson as "a bum" and the ring leader of a cocaine operation busted by police in March 2001, finding 3 ounces of the controlled substance and \$15,000 in Jones' house on Oakhill Avenue.

The judge agreed.

"I really think your boyfriend was the primary drug dealer," Schmucker is shown telling Jones on court videos.

During her June 4, 2003, sentencing, Schmucker told Jones in a court video to clean up her act.

"I would hope this would be enough of a wake-up call," Schmucker said. "You simply need to avoid people who will drag you down."

But she apparently didn't take the judge's advice.

"She did the same thing again," Schmucker said recently.



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Published July 31, 2006

Teen moms learn the power of singing to their babies

Detroit program teaches importance of maternal attention

By David Crumm
Special to the State Journal

The simple crooning of a lullaby could change the lives of children born to single teenage mothers, educators at the Salvation Army say.

"In a lot of families, singing to babies is a natural part of growing up, but a lot of the new moms in our programs are just kids themselves, and they come out of situations where they never learned much about how to care for babies," Maj. Diane Marshall, the Salvation Army leader who is spearheading the new Baby Songs program in metro Detroit, said July 24.

That night, Marshall wrapped up the second, eight-week-long pilot program of Baby Songs with young mothers living temporarily at the Salvation Army's Denby Center in northwest Detroit.

Marshall said she plans to expand the program later this year to more Salvation Army centers.

"To give you an idea what a change this has made: Before we started Baby Song with these moms, we scheduled a weekly time for them to gather together here at the center and play with their babies," Marshall said. "But, what we found them doing was putting their babies in carriers and strollers in a corner of the room and then sitting around a table and playing cards.

"We'd ask, 'Why don't you pick up your babies and play with them?' And they'd say, 'No, he's been bad today, or she's been crying - so they don't get play time today.'

"So, what we're doing with this Baby Song program is we're actually teaching the moms how to play with their babies, how to make the babies feel safe by singing to them, to help them calm down or to help them learn things like simple motor skills."

At the final session, the 10 young mothers sat in a playroom decorated with posters of SpongeBob SquarePants and a princess riding a winged horse. The mothers, ages 13 to 17, spent an hour bouncing, playing and singing along to versions of "You Are My Sunshine," "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" and a dozen other timeless tunes.

Terri Shuler, 16, of Detroit said her 8-month-old daughter, Makiya Newson, "likes all the songs we sing. But the one I sing most of all to her is, 'You Are My Sunshine.' Makiya loves that song!"

As Shuler sang along with the group, she gently bounced her daughter, kissed her, hugged her and rotated her arms and legs. The little girl grinned and kept her eyes locked on her mother's face.

"It's a good thing for us to learn how to sing like this so our babies will grow up happy," Shuler said.

Contact David Crumm at 313-223-4526 or crumm@freepress.com.

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Battles takes over Friend of Court post

Flint

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, July 28, 2006

By Ken Palmer

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A veteran Flint lawyer with a background in labor relations has been selected to run the Genesee County Friend of the Court office.

John G. Battles emerged as the choice from more than 100 applicants for the top administrative job at the agency that is charged with enforcing court orders in divorce and child custody cases, said Chief Genesee County Circuit Judge Archie L. Hayman.

"(Battles) knows the system, knows all the judges, knows the political people and the people involved in the various agencies that come into contact with the Friend of the Court," Hayman said. "He is very sensitive to employee issues that exist in the Friend of the Court."

Battles, 49, will take over the agency on Aug. 31. The starting salary for the post is about \$82,000 annually, Hayman said.

He succeeds former longtime FOC Jennie E. Barkey, who was appointed to a probate court judgeship in February.

Barkey was part of a selection committee that interviewed 14 candidates and narrowed the field to three finalists. Attorneys Kraig Sippell and Jennifer Martin rounded out the final three.

Hayman said he talked with all of the county's circuit, probate and district court judges, and virtually all viewed Battles as the best qualified.

"I'm more than confident that Jack will rise to the task and do an excellent job," Hayman said. "I think he's going to serve the community well."

The Genesee County FOC employs more than 100 people and has the second-largest caseload in the state.

A central state office now collects and distributes all child support and alimony payments. County FOC offices manage the cases, conduct investigations on support and custody issues and enforce court orders.

"I'm very excited about the opportunity," Battles said. "I know there are a lot of challenges ahead of me, and we're going to meet them head on."

His primary task will be trying to improve efficiency and service, he said.

"I think Jennie has done an outstanding job of directing the FOC and handling the personnel decisions, he said.

A Burton native, Battles has been a lawyer for 23 years and previously worked in administration and labor relations at General Motors. He earned his law degree from St. Louis University School of Law.

Since 1998, he's managed attorneys who represent people involved in delinquency and child abuse and neglect cases, working for family court judges Duncan M. Beagle and John A. Gadola.

Besides Barkey, the selection committee included Beagle, circuit court Administrator Barbara Menear and two private practice attorneys.

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Published July 30, 2006

Janelle Lawless: Ingham County improves juvenile justice system

Janelle Lawless is presiding judge of the Family Division of Ingham County Circuit Court.

Since the voters of Ingham County approved the Juvenile Justice millage in November 2002, many improvements have been made to the juvenile justice system.

Most notably, we've seen the creation of local treatment programs for young females placed in custody. We have two new local group home settings for females - one run by locally based Peckham and the other by a nationally recognized company, Sequel.

Instead of receiving treatment in another state, these females now can receive those services locally. Local treatment not only dramatically improves the odds of youth not re-entering the judicial system, it is cost effective.

Since passage of the millage, the county has adopted several other measures aimed at curbing juvenile delinquency. They include establishing a formalized assessment tool for all youth entering the juvenile justice system and all programs used by the system; expanding staff at the county Youth Center to stop chronic overcrowding and region compliance with state licensure requirements; expanding programs for moderate-risk youth by 15 beds and redesigning a program for low-risk youth and their families.

Ingham County currently is looking for a location to house a day treatment and night reporting facility. This facility will be used as an assessment and treatment center for youth who have been placed by the courts. It also will address the educational needs of the youth.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of this new center is the commitment community stakeholders have made to partner with the courts to make the center a success. A community approach to treating delinquent youth is both outcome- and cost-effective.

The community approach that we have developed in Ingham County likely will serve as a model nationwide. Because of the leadership of those involved in the juvenile justice system, including the judges, county commissioners, prosecutor, Sheriff's Department, Lansing Police Department, representatives of the city of Lansing, child and family services, Community Mental Health, local schools and many others, the county now is offering a coordinated system of care to troubled youth.

That means we are not only treating youth more effectively, but we are identifying them earlier in

the process.

Finally, the voters of this county need to be recognized. Without the Juvenile Justice Millage funds, significant improvements to the county's programming and capacity for juveniles would not have been possible.

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U.N. panel criticizes life sentences for juveniles

7/28/2006, 7:53 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A United Nations panel on Friday criticized life-without-parole sentences for juveniles in Michigan and 41 other states, saying it violates an international treaty on human rights.

Critics of Michigan's law briefed the U.N. Human Rights Committee earlier this month. Other issues considered by the panel ranged from U.S. treatment of detainees in the war on terror to domestic concerns involving the death penalty and abortion.

More than 300 Michigan inmates convicted of crimes committed before age 18 are serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole.

The panel noted "concern" with laws allowing offenders under 18 to receive life-without-parole sentences. About 2,200 youth offenders are serving such sentences in the U.S.

"The international community has spoken: Children are not disposable," Kary Moss, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan, said in a statement. "We must work to protect and rehabilitate our children as opposed to locking them up and throwing away the key."

The committee held a two-day hearing last week on U.S. compliance with a major human rights treaty, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Criticism by the panel brings no penalty beyond international scrutiny.

Democratic-sponsored bills in the Michigan Legislature would bar juveniles from being sentenced to life without parole and give those already in prison a chance for parole, but they are opposed by Republicans who control the House and Senate.

Rep. William Van Regenmorter, a Republican from Ottawa County's Georgetown Township who chairs the House Judiciary Committee, said earlier this month that the state's juvenile sentencing law is appropriate and argued that crimes committed by youth are becoming more violent.

On the Net:

ACLU of Michigan: <http://www.aclumich.org>

U.N. Human Rights Commission: <http://www.ohchr.org>

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New day center takes the heat off homeless people

Cooling shelter helps folks endure blazing weather

BY SHABINA S. KHATRI

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

July 30, 2006

When the going gets tough, Keith Vales heads for the park.

Like many of Macomb County's 1,100 homeless people, the 44-year-old, who has been on the streets for about six months, said scorching summers and pouring rain can be almost as unpleasant as Michigan's bitter winters.

But those helping homeless people are hoping two facilities - one recently opened and one planned for a few years down the road -- will make a difference.

Vales, 44, who used to live with a friend in Detroit, said public parks are good locations for waiting out extreme weather because leafy trees provide shade and pavilion roofs keep the rain at bay.

Some people try swimming in creeks, rivers or lakes to cool down, though Macomb Homeless Coalition coordinator Carrie Fortune said there have been several drownings in recent years. She added that others have tried to duck the heat by hanging out in air-conditioned libraries, malls and other public places -- something business owners have repeatedly complained about.

In recent weeks, Vales has come to Macomb County's first day center for homeless people. The Ray of Hope Day Center, located at 176 Northbound Gratiot Ave. in Mt. Clemens, opened in April and this summer is serving as the county's only daytime cooling shelter. Other shelters are open only at night.

"I don't know why nobody did this before us," said Kathy



Tim Lauderbach, 58, gets a break from the heat in the Ray of Hope Day Center in Mt. Clemens. The cooling shelter, an extended service of the Macomb County Warming Center, also offers clothing and mail and phone services to help those looking for jobs. (HEATHER ROUSSEAU/Special to the Free Press)

About the center

The day center for homeless people is at 176 Northbound Gratiot Ave. in Mt. Clemens.

For more information, call project director Kathy Goodrich at 586-466-4413 anytime.

To donate to the

Goodrich, project director. "It's been needed for a long time now."

Goodrich said climbing temperatures have resulted in higher traffic at the center, which is open 9 a.m.-4 p.m. weekdays.

"We average about 30 people daily, but on a hot day we average 40-45," she said Wednesday. "One day we had 50 people -- that was a very hot day."

This week, the Macomb County Rotating Emergency Shelter Team (MCREST), which provides temporary housing in churches, was also busy.

"We've been full for days," Jimetta Lewis, MCREST's executive director, said Friday. She added that the weather might have played a role. "People are trying to get out of the hot weather, and the rain -- it's a steam bath out there."

Both Lewis and Fortune are involved in plans to build a permanent county facility within the next few years.

They are eying Seville Manor in Chesterfield Township, which houses families of troops stationed at Selfridge Air National Guard Base but will be vacant starting the summer of 2008.

"It's not just somewhere to get in from the cold or heat," said Fortune. "It will also be a safe haven for people with severe mental illness."

To pay for operations at the multipurpose building, which would include a drop-in center, support services, a commercial kitchen and an overnight shelter for up to 25 people, MCREST has applied for a \$605,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

But it will be at least six months before the county hears from HUD, Fortune said.

Meanwhile, Vales continues to scan the want ads for a job. "I'm looking for anything," he said.

And Lewis said she doesn't expect any beds to open at MCREST soon.

"There's not many people wanting to leave," she said.

Contact **SHABINA S. KHATRI** at 586-469-8087 or skhatri@freepress.com.

Macomb County Warming Center, which operates the day center, send money to: P.O. Box 53, Roseville, MI 48066.

To donate to the Macomb County Rotating Emergency Shelter Team, visit www.mcrest.org or call 586-415-5101 anytime.



— THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

Chip can provide parents with child ID information

Masons' program transfers documents, physical data to CD

Friday, July 28, 2006

From News staff reports

A one-of-a-kind CD is being made available to parents of elementary and middle school students in Livingston County. It comes in the form of person identification information.

The Brighton Masonic Lodge is offering a free identification clinic Saturday at its lodge in downtown Brighton. Any information brought by a parent or guardian about a child will be transferred to a CD. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children recognizes the Mason's CD, called the Comprehensive Masonic Chip, as one of the most complete child identification programs in the nation.

Parents are recommended to bring a child's birth certificate, Social Security number, immunization records, medical reports, divorce decree, custody or adoption papers, pictures, and vital statistics.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Homeless man's honesty pays off

Monday, July 31, 2006

Charles Moore had never been without shelter until he lost his job as a roofer and wound up on the streets of Detroit as a homeless man.

Last week, he was rummaging through a refuse container looking for returnable bottles when he made an amazing discovery. In the trash bin was almost \$21,000 worth of U.S. savings bonds.

We'll never know whether Moore even thought about keeping the treasure. What we do know is that he took them to a homeless shelter where a staff member tracked down the family of the man who owned them.

Moore's initial reward was \$100, a relatively measly amount which outraged a lot of people. Not surprisingly, his story has made national headlines. Moore was a guest on the radio show of Mitch Albom, nationally known newspaper writer, columnist and author. When Albom asked the obvious question, Moore answered quietly, "It was the right thing to do." He also said that he was homeless for the first time.

As of this writing, the 59-year-old man was receiving more than a paltry hundred bucks. Donations to Moore had topped \$4,000, and someone offered him a job. Moore's initial response was that he would use the money to find an apartment.

This story transcends the plight of one man, even though his deed might have helped change a lot of people's minds about stereotyping the homeless. Hopefully, it will inspire many more citizens who are living comfortable lives to focus more of their attention on an intractable national problem.

Kalamazoo County's homeless numbers have been running between 250 and 300 a night. Local government and private agencies are keenly aware of the issue, and are making genuine efforts to resolve it.

According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, there are between 30,000 and 7 million homeless people in America. One reason for the wide gap is that most homeless people don't stay that way very long.

Homelessness is a complex subject, and its causes are many. Among them are joblessness, domestic violence, alcoholism, drug abuse and various types of mental illness. Statistics suggest a majority of the homeless work, but remain homeless even though they also receive government assistance.

The National Coalition for the Homeless reported that 50 percent of all the homeless are single adults who have a drug or alcohol problem. A third of the homeless are afflicted with some form of mental illness.

However, many homeless people are as much victims of misfortune as of bad choices. They want to work and they want to change their situation for the better. Judging from his good deed, it appears that Charles Moore is among them.

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Gov Touts Health Care In Radio Address

MIRS, Friday, July 28, 2006

In her weekly radio address, Gov. Jennifer [GRANHOLM](#) talked about her MI First Health Care Plan and the importance of providing health care to all of the state's residents.

"When you or someone you care about is sick, the last thing you should worry about is how much the doctor or medicine will cost," Granholm said. "No matter their age, their income, or their hometown, the citizens I've met are struggling to make sure their families have access to the health care they need at a price they can afford."

Granholm said the MI First Health Care Plan will establish universal access to affordable health care coverage for the state's uninsured.

Granholm said that since she's taken office she's restored health care coverage to more than 40,000 people, negotiated the nation's first bulk-buying pool for prescription drugs and created the MiRx discount card to make prescription drugs more affordable for citizens without drug coverage. About 37,000 people are now enrolled.

Granholm said she would travel around the state next week to meet with citizens to discuss the impact of rising health care costs.

"Expanding access to affordable health care is the right thing to do for our families and for our businesses and, as governor, it's an issue I'll continue fighting for on behalf of all our citizens," Granholm said.



Seniors stunned as Medicare drug plans cut off

Monday, July 31, 2006

By Ted Roelofs

The Grand Rapids Press

A few weeks ago, Jean Lumsden stopped at a drug store in Sparta to pick up medications for her elderly uncle, Claude Spencer.

The pharmacist had an unpleasant surprise: She would have to pay the entire amount, since his Medicare drug plan would not cover it.

"I was in shock," recalled Lumsden, who cares for Spencer, 92, in her Rockford area home. "I said, 'No, no, no, this is not right.'"

Lumsden, 62, has since found otherwise. Her uncle, Claude Spencer, 92, has entered a gap in his Medicare drug coverage known as the "doughnut hole."

Seniors and disabled people enrolled in most Medicare "Part D" drug plans will fall into this hole when their total drug costs, paid by both the patient and insurance, reach \$2,250 for the year.

After reaching that ceiling, beneficiaries will have to pay all their drug costs until their total spending for the year reaches \$5,100. At that point, catastrophic coverage kicks in and pays 95 percent of their drug costs.

As estimated four to seven million elderly Americans are projected to hit the limit of their coverage by late summer or early fall, plunging some into financial crisis.

Many of the elderly -- having painstakingly researched this complicated coverage plan -- are prepared for the gap, according to Jo Murphy, program development coordinator for the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan.

But others just didn't see this gap coming, Murphy said.

"They are shocked. Somehow they missed that detail," Murphy said.

It is the latest turn in a drug plan that has been beset from the start by confusion and criticism that it is too complex.

Supporters of the Medicare drug benefit acknowledge that the coverage gap is a problem, but they say the drug benefit was a landmark first step. They say beneficiaries were informed of the coverage gap when they signed up and that enrollees have benefited from lower drug prices negotiated by private health plans.

They also note that enrollees can choose plans that cover much of the coverage gap and that an estimated 2.4 million people have done so.

But the potential of millions of unhappy senior citizens, there are signs the Democrats intend to make the coverage gap a campaign issue this fall. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., said enrollees who hit the limit will discover "costs are going to increase dramatically and, in many instances, to the point where they can't afford their medicines."

Sen. Charles E. Grassley, R-Iowa, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, says Congress created the gap to keep the drug program within its \$400 billion budget and to keep premiums low.

U.S. Rep. Vern Ehlers, R-Grand Rapids, called the coverage limit a "stupid thing" but said it was unlikely Congress would do much about it for a few years.

Ehlers said the coverage gap was a way to extend better coverage to more people, but conceded it will come as a blow to some senior citizens.

"It's the people who are poor enough so it's hard to pay but rich enough so they don't qualify for the poverty benefits," Ehlers said.

For Jean Lumsden, the past few weeks have been a challenge as she scrambles to find a way to pay drug costs for her uncle that have shot up from about \$170 a month to \$500 a month. With heart, kidney and breathing difficulties, her uncle is needs five medications.

Lumsden lives on a fixed income of about \$1,000, about the same as her uncle.

"Between the two of us, we will make it. I guess we are going to have to make it. We don't have any choice."

Kentwood resident Sherry Carroll, 70, lives on Social Security income and a small alimony check. She hit the coverage gap July 1 -- and now has to come up with about \$400 a month to pay for her diabetes medications.

"It was a blow," said Carroll, who was aware of the coverage gap but did not anticipate reaching the threshold so soon.

Like a lot of participants in the plan, Carroll was not aware the cost of her co-pay is combined with the cost of the drug in determining how quickly she reached the limit.

"What little you have, I don't want to spend it all on medicine. You never think you are going to be in this position when you are working."

Carroll appreciates the attempt by Congress to offer senior citizens drug coverage. But she thinks they may need to return to the drawing board.

"I'm not impressed. ... I don't think it was well thought out."

- Press wire services contributed to this story.

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Cadillac Evening News

July 31, 2006

Local Michigan Works! receives funding

CADILLAC - Michigan Works! West Central has been awarded \$36,316 in federal Workforce Investment Act dislocated worker funds, which is used to enhance the employment and training opportunities available to Michigan workers.

The WIA dislocated worker program helps increase employment, job retention and earnings of participants through activities such as skill upgrading, on-the-job training and job placement assistance.

"This program provides critical job training for Michigan citizens that strengthens our workforce, reducing welfare dependency and enhancing our overall economic strength," Gov. Jennifer Granholm said.

There was \$2 million awarded to 25 Michigan Works! businesses in the state.